



Makerspaces, makers, and maker movement

Introduction

Schreiber, Trine Louise

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Trine Schreiber, Associate Professor, Department of Information Studies, University of Copenhagen,
trine.schreiber@hum.ku.dk

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Introduction

Welcome to this special issue of Nordisk Tidsskrift for Informationsvidenskab og Kulturformidling. This time we want to present papers on makerspaces, makers, and maker movement. The word makerspace articulates a site for creative production promoting physical as well as digital activities, information sharing, and engagement with materials, processes, and ideas. Therefore, makerspaces are of interest for design processes in local communities, cultural institutions, NGOs, private companies, etc.

In these years, there is an interest in developing research in this field. A central theme could be how makerspaces give opportunities for exploring boundaries between the physical and digital, between theoretical and practical knowledge, and between construction and mediation. Another theme might concern how to establish co-creation understood as a process where digital technologies, materials, and the interests and knowledge of the participants mutually re-configure each other. The theme of this special issue goes in quite another direction. The focus of the papers will be on the driving forces existing behind the co-construction of makerspaces, makers and maker movement. One paper analyses a practice of curating the maker movement, and it discusses how such practices, among others, might have provided an identity of being a maker. Another paper investigates strengthening and weakening factors for establishing makerspaces in different countries, and it examines what the motivations of the particular makerspace operators were for developing these labs. The third paper analyses and develops a model representing different kinds of motivations for being a maker, and that model is applied when recommendations are giving regarding how to support maker engagement in distributed problem-solving projects. Finally, we have an essay describing a concrete makerspace in a Danish public library. In this way, this issue contributes to a specific theme in the field of research on makerspaces. The papers will be summarized:

The *first* paper, "What makes a maker? Curating a pioneer community through franchising" is written by Andreas Hepp, media researcher from University of Bremen, Germany. In the paper, a makerspace is defined as "a site providing access to the latest creative tools including 3D printing and laser cutting, a place where knowledge sharing and advice are the standard currency". Hepp writes about not only makers and makerspaces but also the maker movement. This movement is defined as a pioneer community taking its first steps around 2005 when among others the magazine *Make:* was launched. He describes the maker movement as a hybrid of social

movements and think tanks, where the first are “engaged in societal transformation from below” and the second are “open to new forms of entrepreneurship”. However, it is also important to say that it is a movement oriented towards media-related change. The paper explores the involvement and contribution of Maker Media, the publishing company of the magazine mentioned, the magazine itself and its online platform to the maker movement. Defining the role of Maker Media as a curator, Hepp translates this practice of curating by using the words of a franchise model. Based on a media-ethnographic approach, the analysis shows how this model became a stabilizing element in the co-construction of the movement by providing professionalization, narration and a framing of the community’s practices.

The *second* paper, “Cui bono? Nodes of participation in the Maker Movement. A case analysis of FabLabs and makerspaces in German- and Arabic-speaking countries”, is written by Sissy-Ve Basmer-Birkenfeld et al., a group of researchers from Helmut Schmidt University, Germany. The authors define FabLabs and makerspaces as representing “first pioneers of bottom-up-economics”, offering “3dprinters, laser cutters, milling machines”, and enabling “anyone to participate in value (co-)creation if one wants to prototype an idea or just tinker around”. By asking ‘cui bono?’, the authors pose the question ‘what is the potential of FabLabs and makerspaces?’ To get closer to the answer, the paper examines the driving forces and obstacles of developing FabLabs in German- and Arabic-speaking countries from the viewpoint of FabLab representatives. The authors conducted interviews with FabLab representative and collected a data material about each FabLab visited in 2017. The FabLab representatives told the authors about the conditions in developing the particular FabLab and about their motivation and visions regarding their work. As an example, it is mentioned in the paper that the motivation was not only to offer access to technologies for their communities, “they want to deliver *low-level* access to new technologies, *connect* competencies, and use *Open Source* technology”. This kind of motivation is found in FabLabs in both German- and Arabic speaking countries. As part of the conclusion, the paper presents a number of recommendations for how to promote new FabLabs including how to support participation in design and production processes.

Bruno Asdourian, communication and media researcher from Fribourg University, and Jimena Lazarte, digital marketing specialist, Switzerland, has written the *third* paper: “Making for humanity. Why makers participate in distributed problem-solving humanitarian projects”. The paper defines makerspaces as “collaborative workspaces for information and communications technology-powered design and production”. The authors explain how the humanitarian sector is in a need of a new business model and technological tools. Maker communities have a lot to offer the sector. Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to support maker engagement in humanitarian projects by understanding the motivations of the makers. The aim is to examine why makers participate in distributed problem-solving humanitarian projects where there seldom are substantial material rewards. Based on both a literature review and investigations involving interview as well as questionnaire the paper develops a model identifying the most significant motives for maker participation. It is found that the most significant motives are interest and enjoyment followed by relatedness, symbolic affinity and competence. This is relevant information not only for humanitarian projects but also project organizers in general.

As shown, the definitions of makerspace across the three papers have many similarities. However, their approaches differ from one another. It is different kind of cases, different contexts and different theories. Still, they all highlight the same question: how can we describe the agenda, incentives, and motivations that shape makerspaces, makers, and maker movement.

After the three papers, an essay follows. Under the heading “Ballerup Bibliotekernes Makerspace”, Michael Anker and Thomas Sture Rasmussen from Ballerup public library describe a particular makerspace in Denmark, a makerspace in the library in Ballerup Municipality. The contribution gives us a concrete understanding of what a makerspace might be today.

I wish you a pleasant reading.